THE WAY OF THE CROSS

ITS EFFICACY AND PRACTICE

Rt. Rev. Dom
COLUMBA MARMION, O.S.B.

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THE WAY OF THE CROSS
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Other Works by
Abbot COLUMBA MARMION

CHRIST THE LIFE OF THE SOUL.

Spiritual Conferences. Translated by a Nun of Tyburn Convent.

"I very gladly advise all those who seek in the English language a work that will surely help and guide them on the path of closer union with their Maker, to read and study this translation of the extremely valuable treatise which is the outcome of long thought and labour on the part of the Abbot of Maredsous."—His Eminence Cardinal Bourne.

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CHRIST IN HIS MYSTERIES.

Autumn 1923.

LE CHRIST IDÉAL DU MOINE.

Conférences spirituelles sur la vie religieuse et monastique.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

ITS EFFICACY AND PRACTICE

BY THE

RT. REV. DOM COLUMBA MARMION, O.S.B.
ABBOT OF MAREDSOUS

Translated from the French by a Nun of Tyburn Convent

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THE publication of the little book, of which this is a translation, almost coincided with the death of Abbot Columba Marmion. That this should have been so appears both very appropriate and touching to those who know the great devotion he had to the "Way of the Cross." He made this exercise every day, even when travelling. Shortly before his holy death, which took place on January 30th in this present year 1923, he asked for his little pocket "Way of the Cross," indulgenced by His Holiness Benedict XV., and composed of fourteen metal plaques, folding one upon another, upon which were engraved the scenes of the Passion.

FOREWORD.*

THE Passion constitutes the "Holy of Holies" among the mysteries of Jesus. It is the crowning-point of His public life, the summit of His mission here below, the work towards which all the others converge, or from which they derive their value.

Each year during Holy Week, the Church commemorates in detail the various phases of the Passion; each day, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, she renews the remembrance and the reality of it in order to apply its fruits to us.

To this central action of the liturgy is attached a practice of piety which, without

* With a few modifications, these pages are taken from the work *Christ in His Mysteries*. For typographical reasons, the footnotes giving the references to the texts of Holy Scripture have been omitted.

belonging to the public official worship organised by the Bride of Christ, has become, on account of the abundance of graces whereof it is the source, very dear to faithful souls. This is the devotion to the Passion of Jesus under the well-known form of the "Way of the Cross."

The immediate preparation which the Saviour made before His oblation as High Priest upon Calvary was to bear His Cross from the Pretorium to Golgotha, overwhelmed by sufferings, despised and insulted.

The Blessed Virgin Mary and the first Christians evidently more than once retraced this path, shedding tears of compassion at the places sanctified by the sufferings of the Man-God.

We know with what glowing fervour the faithful of the West undertook, in the Middle Ages, the long and painful pilgrimage to the Holy Places, in order to venerate the Saviour's blood-stained footsteps; their piety was nourished at a fruitful source of priceless graces. Returned to their own countries, they had it at heart to preserve their re-

membrances of the days passed in prayer at Jerusalem. From this it befell that, especially from the fifteenth century, the sanctuaries and "stations" of the Holy City were reproduced almost everywhere. The piety of the faithful thus found a means of satisfying itself by a spiritual pilgrimage renewed at will. Later on, at a comparatively recent period, the Church enriched this practice with the same indulgences gained by those who made the "stations" at Jerusalem.

In order to gather the precious fruits of this practice as well as to gain the numerous indulgences with which the Church has enriched it, it suffices to visit the fourteen stations without notable interruption, to stay a while at each of them, and there to meditate upon the Saviour's Passion. No formula of prayer is prescribed, no form of meditation is imposed, not even that of the subject suggested by the "station." Full liberty is left to the attraction of each one and to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

THE EFFICACY OF THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

The contemplation of the sorrows of Jesus is sovereignly fruitful for souls: no detail is negligible in the Passion of Christ, the Son of God, the object of His Father's complacency. Jesus especially manifests His virtues in the course of His Passion. Ever living, He produces within us the perfection that we contemplate in His immolation.

The contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus is very profitable. After the Sacraments and liturgical worship, there is no practice more useful for our souls than the Way of the Cross made with devotion. Its supernatural efficacy is sovereign. What is the reason of this?

First of all, because the Passion of Jesus is His essential work; nearly all the details of it were foretold. There is no other mystery of Jesus whereof the circumstances were announced with so much care by the psalmist

and prophets. And when we read, in the Gospel, the account of the Passion, we are struck by the attention that Christ Jesus shows to "fulfil" what had been announced concerning Him. If He permits the presence of the traitor at the Last Supper, it is "that the Scripture may be fulfilled." He tells the Jews, who had come to lay hands upon Him, that He delivers Himself up to them "that the Scriptures . . . might be fulfilled": *Ut adimplerentur Scripturae.* St John relates how Our Saviour, upon the Cross, calls to mind that the Psalmist had predicted of Him: "In My thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Then in order that this prophecy might yet be accomplished Jesus cried: "I thirst," *Postea, sciens Jesus quia omnia consummata sunt,* UT *consummaretur Scriptura, dixit: Sitio.* Nothing in this is little or negligible, because all these details mark the actions of a Man-God.

With all these actions of Jesus, the Father is well pleased. He contemplates His Son with love, not only on Thabor, when Christ

is in the splendour of His glory, but likewise when Pilate shows Him to the multitude, crowned with thorns, and become the outcast of humanity; in the ignominies of His Passion as well as in the splendours of the Transfiguration: *Hic est Filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene complacui.*

During His Passion, Jesus honours and glorifies His Father in an infinite measure, not only because He is the Son of God, but also because He yields Himself up to all that His Father's justice and love demand of Him. If He could say, in the course of His public life, that He always did the things that pleased His Father: *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper,* it is especially true of those hours when, in order to acknowledge the rights of Divine Majesty outraged by sin, and to save the world, He delivered Himself up to death, and to the death of the Cross: *Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem.* The Father loves Him with a boundless love because He gives His life for His sheep, and because by His sufferings, by His satisfactions, He merits for us all

the graces that win back for us the friendship of His Father: PROPTEREA *me diligit Pater* QUIA *ego pono animam meam.*

Moreover, we should love to meditate upon the Passion because therein Christ makes His virtues shine forth with such brilliance. He possesses every virtue within His soul, but the occasions of manifesting them especially arise in His Passion. His immense love for His Father, His charity for mankind, hatred of sin, forgiveness of injuries, patience, meekness, fortitude, obedience to lawful authority, compassion, all these virtues shine out in a heroic manner in these days of sorrow.

When we contemplate Jesus in His Passion, we see the Exemplar of our life, the Model—admirable and accessible at the same time—of those virtues of compunction, abnegation, patience, resignation, abandonment to God's will, charity, meekness, which we ought to practise so as to become like unto our Divine Head: *Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me.*

There is a third aspect which we too often forget, an aspect of which, however, the importance is extreme. When we contemplate the sufferings of Jesus, He grants us, according to the measure of our faith, grace to practise the virtues which He revealed during those holy hours. How is this ?

When Christ dwelt upon earth, an all-powerful virtue went out from His Divine Person, healing bodily infirmities, enlightening the mind, and quickening the soul : *Virtus de illo exibat, et sanabat omnes.*

Something analogous comes to pass when we place ourselves in contact with Jesus by faith. To those who lovingly followed Him along the road to Golgotha or were present at His Immolation, Christ surely granted special graces. This virtue which went out from Him still does so ; and when, in a spirit of faith, in order to compassionate His sufferings, and to imitate Him, we follow Him from the Pretorium to Calvary and take our stand at the foot of the Cross, He gives us the same graces,

He makes us partakers of the same favours. Never let us forget that Christ Jesus is not a dead and inert model; but, ever living, He supernaturally produces in those who draw near to Him in the right dispositions, the perfection that they contemplate in His Person.

At each station our Divine Saviour presents Himself to us in the triple character of the Mediator who saves us by His merits, of the perfect Model of sublime virtues, and of the efficacious Cause who can, through His Divine Omnipotence, produce in our souls the virtues of which He gives us the example.

It may be said that these characters are to be found in all the mysteries of Jesus Christ. That is true, but with how much more plenitude in the Passion which is pre-eminently the mystery of Jesus?

This is why, if, every day, during a few moments, interrupting your work, laying aside your preoccupations, and closing your heart to all outward things, you accompany the Man-God along the road to Calvary,

with faith, humility and love, with the true desire of imitating the virtues that He manifests in His Passion, be assured that your souls will receive choice graces which will transform them little by little into the likeness of Jesus, and of Jesus Crucified. Now is it not in this likeness that St Paul sums up all holiness ?

We will now make the Way of the Cross ; the considerations here presented at each station have no other end than to help us in our meditation. We can each take what we will, varying these considerations and affections according to our aptitudes and the needs of our souls.

EXERCISE OF THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

Before beginning, let us recall St Paul's recommendation: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. . . . He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross." The more we enter into these dispositions that filled the Heart of Jesus as He passed along the Sorrowful Way—love towards His Father, charity towards men, hatred of sin, dispositions of humility and obedience, —the more our souls will receive graces and lights, because the Father will behold in us a more perfect image of His Divine Son.

My Jesus, You followed this path for love of me in bearing Your Cross. I wish to follow it with You, and like You: pour into my heart the sentiments which overflowed from Yours in those holy hours. Offer to Your Father for me the Precious

Blood that You then shed for my salvation and sanctification.

I. Jesus is condemned to death by Pilate.

"And Jesus stood before the governor:" *Stetit ante praesidem.* He stands, because, being the second Adam, He is the Head of all the race which He is about to redeem by His immolation. The first Adam had merited death by his sin: *stipendia enim peccati mors.* Jesus, innocent, but laden with the sins of the world, is to expiate them by His sacrifice of blood. The chief priests, the pharisees, His own nation surround Him with furious clamours. Through these clamours our own sins cry out and tumultuously demand the death of the Just: "Crucify Him:" *Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum!* The cowardly Roman Governor delivers the Victim up to His enemies that they may hang Him upon the Cross.

Let us contemplate Jesus at this moment.

If He stands because He is our Head; if, as St Paul says, He gives testimony to the truth of His doctrine, to the divinity of His Person, and of His mission, He yet humbles Himself in interior self-abasement before the sentence pronounced by Pilate, in whom He acknowledges an authentic power. In this earthly power, unworthy but legitimate, Jesus beholds the majesty of His Father. Therefore He delivers Himself up more than He is delivered: *Tradebat judicanti se injuste.* He humbles Himself in obeying even unto death; for us He voluntarily accepts the sentence of condemnation, in order to restore life to us: *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit.*

We ought to unite ourselves to Jesus in His obedience, and accept all that our Heavenly Father shall impose upon us.

Let us, even now, accept death in expiation for our sins, with all the circumstances wherewith it shall please Providence to surround it; let us accept it as a homage rendered to Divine justice and holiness outraged by our iniquities; united with the

death of Jesus it will become "precious in the sight of the Lord."

My Divine Master, I unite myself to Your Sacred Heart in Its perfect submission and entire abandonment to the Father's Will. May the virtue of Your grace produce in my soul that spirit of submission which will yield me unreservedly and without murmuring to the Divine good pleasure, and to all that it shall please You to send me at the hour when I must leave this world!

II. Jesus is laden with His Cross.

"Then therefore (Pilate) delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him forth . . . bearing His own Cross": *Bajulans sibi crucem.*

Jesus had made an act of obedience; He had delivered Himself up to the will of the Father, and now the Father shows Him what obedience imposes upon Him: it is the Cross. He accepts it as coming from the Father's hands, with all that it

brings with it of distress and ignominy. At that instant Jesus accepted the increase of suffering that this heavy burden, laid upon His bruised shoulders, brought to Him, and the indescribable sufferings wherewith His sacred members were to be afflicted at the moment of the crucifixion. He accepted the bitter sarcasms, the malignant blasphemies, which His enemies, apparently triumphant, were about to heap upon Him as soon as they should see Him hung upon the infamous gibbet: He accepted the three hours' agony, the being forsaken by His Father. . . . We shall never sound the depths of the abyss of afflictions to which our Divine Saviour consented in receiving His Cross. At this moment, too, Christ Jesus, Who represented us all, and was going to die for us, accepted the Cross for all His members, for each one of us: *vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit.* He then united to His own sufferings all the sufferings of His mystical body, causing them to find in this union their value and price.

Let us therefore accept our cross in union with Him, like Him, so as to be worthy disciples of this Divine Head; let us accept it without reasoning, without repining. Although the Cross that the Father laid upon Jesus was of such weight, was His love, His confidence towards His Father diminished thereby? Quite the contrary. "The Chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Let it be the same with us. "If any man will come after Me let him . . . take up his cross and follow Me." Do not let us be of those whom St Paul calls "enemies of the cross of Christ." Rather let us take up our cross, the one that God lays upon us. In the generous acceptation of this cross, we shall find peace. Nothing brings such peace to the soul that is in suffering, as this utter self-surrender to God's good pleasure.

My Jesus, I accept all the crosses, and the contradictions, all the adversities that the Father has destined for me. May the unction of Your grace give me strength to bear these crosses with the submission of

which You gave us the example in receiving Yours for us. May I never seek my glory save in the sharing of Your sufferings!

III. Jesus falls the First Time under the Cross.

He shall be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity," *Vir dolorum, sciens infirmitatem.*

This prophecy of Isaias is fulfilled to the letter. Jesus, exhausted by His sufferings of soul and body, sinks under the weight of His Cross. He, the Omnipotent, falls from weakness. This weakness of Jesus is a homage to His Divine power. By it, He expiates our sins, He repairs the result of our pride, and raises up a fallen world powerless to save itself: *Deus qui in Filii tui humilitate jacentem mundum erexisti.* . . . Moreover, at that moment, He merited for us the grace to humble ourselves for our sins, to acknowledge our falls and sincerely confess them; He merited for us the grace of fortitude to sustain our weakness.

With Christ, prostrate before His Father, let us detest the risings of our vanity and ambition; let us acknowledge the extent of our frailty. As God casts down the proud, so the humble avowal of our infirmity draws down His mercy, "For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." Let us then cry: "God, mercy," in the moments when we feel that we are weak in face of the cross, of temptation, of the accomplishment of the Divine will: *Miserere mei; Domine, quoniam infirmus sum.* It is when we thus humbly declare our infirmity that grace, which alone can save us, triumphs within us: *Virtus in infirmitate perficitur.*

O Christ Jesus, prostrate beneath Your Cross, I adore You. "Power of God," You show Yourself overwhelmed with weakness so as to teach us humility and confound our pride. O High Priest, full of holiness, Who passed through our trials in order to be like unto us and be able to compassionate our infirmities, do not leave me to myself for I am but frailty. May Your power dwell in me, so that I fall not

into evil: *Ut inhabitet in me virtus Christi!*

IV. Jesus meets His Holy Mother.

The day has come for the Blessed Virgin, whereon Simeon's prophecy is to be fully realised in her: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce." In the same way that she was united to Jesus when offering Him, in years gone by, in the Temple, so now in this hour when Jesus is about to consummate His sacrifice she wills more than ever to enter into His dispositions and share His sufferings. She sets out towards Calvary, where she knows that her Son is to be crucified. Upon the way she meets Him. What immense sorrow to see Him in this terrible state! Her gaze meets His and the abyss of the sufferings of Jesus calls upon the abyss of His Mother's compassion. What is there that she would not do for Him!

This meeting was at once a source of sorrow and a principle of joy for Jesus;

of sorrow, in seeing the deep desolation in which His sorrowful state plunged His Mother's soul; of joy, in the thought that His sufferings were to pay the price for all the privileges which she had already received, and those yet to be lavished upon her.

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin to associate us with her in the contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus, and to make us share in her compassion towards Him, that therein we may draw the hatred of sin which required such an expiation. It has at times pleased God to manifest sensibly the fruit that the contemplation of the Passion produces, by imprinting on the bodies of some Saints, like St Francis of Assisi, the stigmata of the wounds of Jesus. We ought not to wish for these outward marks; but we ought to ask that the image of the suffering Christ may be imprinted upon our hearts. Let us beg this precious grace from the Blessed Virgin: *Sancta mater istud agas, crucifixi fige plagas cordi meo valide.*

O Mother, behold your Son; by the love that we bear towards Him, obtain for us

that the remembrance of His sufferings may everywhere follow us; it is in His name that we ask this of you; to refuse it to us would be to refuse it to Himself, since we are His members. O Christ Jesus, behold Your Mother; for her sake, grant that we may compassionate Your sorrows so that we may become like unto You!

V. Simon the Cyrenean helps Jesus to carry His Cross.

"And, going out, they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon; him they forced to take up His Cross."

Jesus is exhausted. Although He is the Almighty, He wills that His Sacred Humanity, laden with all the sins of the world, should feel the weight of justice and expiation. But He wants us to help Him to bear His Cross. Simon represents us all, and Christ asks all of us to share in His sufferings; we are His disciples only on this condition: "If any man will come after

Me, let him . . . take up his cross, and follow Me." The Father has decreed that a share of sorrow should be left to His Son's mystical body, and a portion of expiation should be borne by His members. Jesus wills it likewise, and it was in order to signify this Divine decree that He accepted the help of the Cyrenean.

But, at the same time, He merited for us the grace of fortitude to sustain trials generously. In His Cross He has placed the unction that makes ours tolerable; for, in carrying our cross, it is truly His own that we accept. He unites our sufferings to His sorrow, and He confers upon them, by this union, an inestimable value, the source of great merits.

Therefore, says St Paul, "Let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us: looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, Who, having joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. Think diligently upon Him Who endured such opposition from sinners

against Himself; that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds."

My Jesus, I accept from Your hand the particles that You detach for me from Your Cross. I accept all the disappointments, the contradictions, the sufferings, the sorrows that You permit or that it pleases You to send me. I accept them as my share of expiation. Unite the little that I do to Your unspeakable sufferings, for it is from them that mine draw all their merit!

VI. A woman wipes the face of Jesus.

Tradition relates that a woman, touched with compassion, drew near to Jesus and offered Him a linen cloth to wipe His adorable Face.

Isaias foretells of the suffering Jesus: "There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness, and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him": *Non est ei species, neque decor, nec reputavimus eum.* The Gospel tells us that during those terrible hours after

His apprehension, the soldiers had dealt Him insolent blows, that they had spat in His face; the crowning with thorns had caused the blood to pour down upon His sacred countenance. Christ Jesus willed that we should be healed by the bruises that His Divine Face received for us: *Livore ejus sanati sumus.*

Being our Elder Brother, He restored to us, by substituting Himself for us in His Passion, the grace that makes of us the children of His Father. We must be like to Him, since such is the very form of our predestination: *Conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui.* All disfigured as He is by our sins, Christ, in His Passion, remains the beloved Son, the object of all His Father's delight. We are like to Him in this, if we keep within us sanctifying grace which is the principle of our divine similitude. Again we are like to Him in practising the virtues that He manifests during His Passion, in sharing the love that He bears towards His Father and towards souls, His patience, fortitude, meekness and gentleness.

O Heavenly Father, in return for the bruises that Thy Son Jesus willed to suffer for us, glorify Him, exalt Him, give unto Him that splendour which He merited when His adorable countenance was disfigured for our salvation!

VII. Jesus falls the Second Time.

Let us consider our Divine Saviour again sinking under the weight of the Cross. God has laid all the sins of the world upon His shoulders. *Posuit Dominus in eo iniquitatem omnium nostrum.* They are our sins that crush Him. He beholds them all in their multitude and in their every detail. He accepts them as His own to the extent that He no longer appears, according to St Paul's own words, anything but a living sin: *Pro nobis peccatum fecit.* As the Eternal Word, Jesus is all powerful; but He chooses to feel all the weakness of a burdened humanity: this wholly voluntary weakness honours the justice of His Heavenly Father, and merits strength for us.

Never let us forget our infirmities; never let us give way to pride. However great may be the progress we believe we have made, we always remain too weak of ourselves to carry our cross after Jesus: *Sine me nihil potestis facere.* The Divine virtue that goes out from Him alone becomes our strength: *omnia possum in eo qui me confortat;* but it is only given to us if we often ask for it.

O Jesus, weak for love of us, crushed under the weight of my sins, give me the strength that is in You, so that You alone may be glorified by my works!

VIII. Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem.

"And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days

shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren. . . . Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us. . . . For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry."

Jesus knows the ineffable exigencies of His Father's justice and holiness. He reminds the daughters of Jerusalem that this justice and this holiness are adorable perfections of the Divine Being. Jesus Himself is "a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners;" He only substitutes Himself for them; and yet, see how rigorously Divine justice strikes Him. If this justice requires of Him so extensive an expiation, what will be the rigour of the stripes dealt to the guilty who obstinately refuse to unite their share of expiation to the sufferings of Christ. *Horrendum est incidere in manus Dei viventis.* Upon that day, the confusion of human pride will be so great, so terrible will be the chastisement of those who wanted to do without God, that these unhappy ones, outcast from God for ever, will gnash their teeth in despair, they will

call upon the hills to cover them, as if the hills could hide them from the fiery darts of a justice of which they will clearly see the entire equity. . . .

Let us implore mercy from Jesus for the dreadful day when He will come, no longer as a Victim bowed down under the weight of our sins, but as the Sovereign Judge to Whom the Father has given all power.

O my Jesus, grant me mercy! O Jesus, True Vine, grant that I may remain united to You by grace and good works, so that I may bear fruit worthy of You. Grant that I may not become, through my sins, a dead branch, good for nothing but to be gathered up and cast into the fire!

IX. Jesus falls for the Third Time.

"The Lord was pleased to bruise Him in infirmity," said Isaias, speaking of Christ during His Passion: *Dominus voluit conterere eum in infirmitate.* Jesus is crushed beneath the weight of justice. We shall never

be able, even in heaven, to measure what it was for Jesus to be subject to the darts of Divine justice. No creature, not even the damned, has borne the weight of it, in all its fulness. But the sacred Humanity of Jesus, united to this Divine justice by immediate contact, underwent all its power and all its rigour. This is why, as a Victim Who delivered Himself out of love to all its action, He falls prostrate, crushed and broken beneath its weight.

O my Jesus, teach me to detest sin which obliges justice to require of You such expiation. Grant that I may unite all my sufferings to Yours, so that by them my sins may be blotted out and I may make satisfaction even here below!

X. Jesus is stripped of His Garments.

"They parted My garments amongst them; and upon My vesture they cast lots." This is the prophecy of the Psalmist. Jesus is stripped of everything and placed in the nakedness of utter poverty. He does not

even dispose of His garments; for, as soon as He is raised upon the Cross, the soldiers will divide them amongst themselves and will cast lots for His coat.

Nothing is so glorious to God nor so useful for our souls as to unite the offering of ourselves, absolutely and without condition, to the offering which Jesus made at the moment when He gave Himself up to the executioners to be stripped of His raiment and fastened to the Cross "that through His poverty (we) might be rich." This offering of ourselves is a true sacrifice; this immolation to the Divine good-pleasure is the basis of all spiritual life. But in order that it may gain all its worth, we must unite it to that of Jesus, for it is by this oblation that He has sanctified us all: *In qua voluntate sanctificati sumus.*

O my Jesus, accept the offering that I make to You of all my being: join it to that which You made to Your Heavenly Father at the moment when You reached Calvary; strip me of all attachment to created things and to myself!

XI. Jesus is nailed to the Cross.

"They crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst." Jesus delivers Himself up to His executioners "dumb as a lamb before his shearers." The torture of the nails being driven into the hands and feet is inexpressible. Still less could anyone describe all that the Sacred Heart of Jesus endured in the midst of these torments! Jesus must doubtless have repeated the words He had said on entering into this world: "Father, Thou wouldst no more holocausts of animals, they are insufficient to acknowledge Thy sanctity . . . but a body Thou hast fitted to me": *Corpus autem aptasti mihi.* "Behold, I come!" Jesus unceasingly gazes into the face of His Father, and, with incommensurable love, He yields up His body to repair the insults offered to the Eternal Majesty. *Factus obediens usque ad mortem.* And what manner of death does He undergo? The death of

the Cross: *Mortem autem crucis.* Why is this? Because it is written: "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." He willed to be "reputed with the wicked," in order to confess the sovereign rights of the Divine Sanctity.

He delivers Himself likewise for us. Jesus, being God, saw us all at that moment, He offered Himself to redeem us, because it is to Him, High Priest and Mediator, that the Father has given us: *Quia tui sunt.* What a revelation of the love of Jesus for us! He could not have done more: *Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis.* And this love is likewise the love of the Father and the Holy Spirit, for these Three are but One. . . .

O Jesus, Who, "in obeying the will of the Father and through the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, did by Your death give life to the world, deliver me by Your most sacred Body and Blood from all my iniquities and from all evils; make me ever adhere to Your commandments and never suffer me to be separated from You!"

XII. Jesus dies upon the Cross.

"And Jesus crying with a loud voice said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit. And saying this, He gave up the ghost." After three hours of indescribable sufferings, Jesus dies. The only oblation worthy of God, the one sacrifice that redeems the world, and sanctifies souls, is consummated: *Una enim oblatione consummavit in sempiternum sanctificatos.*

Christ Jesus had promised that when He should be lifted up from the earth, He would draw all things to Himself: *Et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum.* We belong to Him by a double title: as creatures drawn out of nothing by Him, for Him: as souls redeemed by His Precious Blood: *Redemisti nos, Domine, in sanguine tuo.* A single drop of the Blood of Jesus, the Man-God, would have sufficed to save us, for everything in Him is of infinite value; but, besides many other reasons, He willed to shed His Blood to the last drop in causing

His Sacred Heart to be pierced so as to manifest to us the extent of His love. And it was for all of us that He shed it; each one can repeat in all truth the burning words of St Paul: "He loved me, and delivered Himself for me."

Let us implore Him to draw us to His Sacred Heart by the virtue of His death upon the Cross; to grant that we may die to our self-love and our self-will, the sources of so many infidelities and sins, and that we may live for Him Who died for us. Since it is to His death that we owe the life of our souls, is it not just that we should live only for Him? *Ut et qui vivunt, jam non sibi vivant, sed ei qui pro ipsis mortuus est.*

O Father, glorify Thy Son hanging upon the gibbet. Since He humbled Himself even to the death of the Cross, exalt Him: may the name that Thou hast given Him be glorified; may every knee bow before Him, and every tongue confess that Thy Son Jesus lives henceforward in Thy Eternal glory!

XIII. The body of Jesus is taken down from the Cross and given to His Mother.

The mangled body of Jesus is restored to Mary. We cannot imagine the grief of the Blessed Virgin at this moment: never did mother love her child as Mary loved Jesus. The Holy Spirit had fashioned within her a mother's heart to love a Man-God. Never did human heart beat with more tenderness for the Word Incarnate than did the heart of Mary; for she was full of grace, and her love met with no obstacle to its expansion.

Then she owed all to Jesus; her immaculate conception, the privileges that made of her a unique creature had been given to her in prevision of the death of her Son. What inexpressible sorrow was hers when she received the blood-stained body of Jesus into her arms!

Let us throw ourselves down at her feet and ask her forgiveness for the sins that were the cause of so many sufferings. O

Mother, fount of love, make me understand the strength of your love, so that I may share your grief; make my heart glow with love for Christ, my God, so that I may think only of pleasing Him!

XIV. Jesus is laid in the Sepulchre.

Joseph of Arimathea, having taken the body of Jesus down from the Cross, "wrapped Him in fine linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre that was hewed in stone, wherein never yet any man had been laid."

St Paul says that Christ was "in all things to be made like unto His brethren"; even in His burial, Jesus is one of us. They bound the body of Jesus, says St John, "in linen cloths, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury." But the body of Jesus, united to the Word, was not "to suffer corruption." He was to remain scarcely three days in the tomb; by His own power, Jesus was to come forth victorious over death, resplendent with life and

glory, and death was no more to "have dominion over Him."

The Apostle St Paul tells us again that "we are buried together with Him by baptism" so that we may die to sin: *Consepulti enim sumus cum illo per baptismum in mortem.* The waters of baptism are like a sepulchre where we have left sin behind, and whence we come forth, animated by a new life, the life of grace. The sacramental virtue of our baptism ever endures. In uniting ourselves by faith and love to Christ laid in the tomb, we renew this grace of dying to sin in order to live only for God.

Lord Jesus, may I bury in Your tomb all my sins, all my failings, all my infidelities; by the virtue of Your Death and Burial, give me grace to renounce more and more all that separates me from You; to renounce Satan, the world's maxims, my self-love. By the virtue of Your Resurrection grant that, like You, I may no longer live save for the glory of Your Father! AMEN.

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